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September 25, 2014

The Honorable Thomas L. Tidwell
Chief of the Forest Service
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington DC 20250-1111

RE: Commercial Filming in Wilderness

Dear Chief Tidwell,

I write to express my concerns over the U.S. Forest Service's proposal to limit the use of commercial video and still photography on National Forest System lands. It is my understanding the "Proposed Directive for Commercial Filming in Wilderness" could make it dramatically more difficult for individuals, news organizations, and other media outlets to record and showcase the extraordinary qualities of these public lands.

Reports indicate that those who seek to broadcast images of our national forest lands and wildlife could be required to apply for a special-use permit, costing as much as \$1,500. In reviewing these permits, the Forest Service would have the ability to limit who can take photographs and videos, where videos and photographs are taken, and how the media is used.

While I will continue to strongly support protecting our most vulnerable and iconic natural resources, I believe we need to take a balanced approach that provides for reasonable public access to our federal lands without burdensome costs and regulations.

Foremost, I am concerned about the important First Amendment rights of journalists. They should be able to have access to these public areas in order to communicate with the public – whether about potential environmental challenges or extraordinary natural assets.

As an example, this last August, I invited members of the media to an event on Forest Service property at a public trail alongside the Big Quilcene River to highlight efforts to increase protections for this important watershed and the forest that surrounds it. I am concerned that regulations and costs like those under consideration would create unnecessary barriers that would preclude local media members from participating, and, as a consequence, local residents from having access to information about these stunning lands and waters.

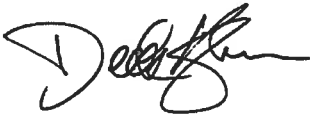
If we as a nation are going to develop the next generation of conservationists, we need to ensure folks have access to – and appreciation of – our public lands and wilderness areas. We should encourage

people to visit them. Increasing access and showing off what our public lands have to offer inspires people to be thoughtful stewards of these valuable areas for generations to come.

I ask that the Forest Service carefully revisit its proposals to ensure that individuals and media outlets seeking to spread the word about the importance of our shared natural resources are not subject to new, burdensome regulations.

Thank you for this attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Derek Kilmer', with a stylized, cursive script.

Derek Kilmer
U.S. Representative